



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

SENIOR DIRECTOR FOR EARLY LEARNING

First Things First (Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board) is a public agency and one of the critical state partners in creating a child and family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative and high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, health and early education of all Arizona's children. Passed by voter initiative in 2006, First Things First is funded through a tax on tobacco products. Governed by a State Board and 31 Regional Partnership Councils, First Things First engages diverse constituencies across the state to accomplish its mission. Organizational values include a child and family-centered focus that is coordinated and collaborative; a comprehensive systems approach with continuous inquiry, learning and continuous improvement; and, transparency and strong accountability toward achieving outcomes that will ensure all young children start kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. First Things First strives to be a national model of excellence in all endeavors and acts in accordance with our Beliefs, Actions and Performance statements, which are attached.

Position Summary

The First Things First Senior Director for Early Learning works independently and in agreement with the Chief Program Officer, the Chief Executive Officer and organizational leadership to recommend, develop, implement and monitor exemplary early learning policy initiatives and programs to achieve the priority goals of the agency. The Senior Director is an expert in early learning for young children, and leads First Things First policy and program development related to high quality early care and education in a mixed service delivery system that includes child care programs that are private, public, faith-based and tribal, pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, center and home-based programs, and family, friend and neighbor care; program standards, early learning standards, appropriate curriculum and assessment; strategies that improve access and affordability to high quality programs, including scholarships and expansion; recruitment and professional development for the early care and education workforce; and, early screening, identification and inclusion of children with developmental delay and special health care needs. The Senior Director provides oversight and leadership for Quality First, Arizona's early childhood quality improvement and rating system, which is a Signature Program of First Things First. This position is critical in statewide systems planning and advances solutions that positively impact and enhance a coordinated state early childhood development and health system. The Senior Director for Early Learning reports directly to the Chief Program Officer. This position requires approximately 20% travel throughout the state.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The ideal candidate enthusiastically supports the vision and mission of First Things First, and possesses the personal qualities of integrity, credibility and competency. She/he is an early childhood and children's health systems thinker and leader and has a proven track record of coordinating and collaborating with diverse constituencies, organizations and agencies across Arizona. The candidate demonstrates obvious understanding of and comfort in working in a decentralized, transparent organization.

Primary Responsibilities

- Lead the development of long-term strategies and implementation of services and programs in the area of early learning for young children that improve children's readiness for kindergarten entry.
- Ensure FTF Standards of Practice for early learning strategies appropriately address early screening, identification, early learning interventions and inclusion of children with developmental delay or special health care needs.
- Administer programmatic quality assurance and technical assistance efforts for all early learning strategies.
- Lead FTF support for statewide and multi-regional capacity building and coordination in early learning strategies and programs.
- Accurately measure and report progress of FTF programmatic priorities related to early learning, especially progress on School Readiness Indicators.
- Ensure short and long-term strategic plan objectives are achieved to support division and organizational goals.
- Provide primary support to the Early Learning Policy Advisory Committee of the Early Childhood Development and Health Board.
- Lead the Early Learning strategy workgroup and facilitate a learning community for the FTF organization.
- Facilitate the Early Learning team in providing excellent service and support for the FTF Regional Partnership Councils and the Board.
- Provide effective team leadership; select and retain qualified staff to ensure the provision of high-quality services in a manner consistent with the principles of the FTF organizational culture.
- Assure that financial oversight and program budgeting for early learning is rigorous, meets fiscal and organizational guidelines and reflects the values and priorities of FTF.
- Contribute to the planning, development, training and implementation of policies, procedures and practices for the Program Division to ensure high quality and efficient services are provided.
- Employ regular cross-divisional communication within the Program Division and with all FTF Divisions.
- Make recommendations to and keep the Chief Program Officer informed on the programmatic operations, issues and needs of the Early Learning team.
- Represent the Early Learning team on the Chief Executive Officer's Management Team.
- Coordinate and collaborate with external customers including local partnership council staff and volunteers, board members, state agency and tribal representatives, committee members, contractors and outside service vendors and other community stakeholders.
- Identify areas for self-improvement in order to perform assigned projects and carry out responsibilities to meet desired outcomes; actively pursue appropriate means and methods to increase effectiveness in those areas.

Qualifications

- Thorough knowledge and a minimum 10 years previous experience in early learning policy issues, including early screening, identification, intervention and inclusion of children with developmental delay or special health care needs, and the relationship with children's health and family support policy issues and effective practices at the state and national level.
- Thorough knowledge and previous experience in early childhood systems and service delivery; program development, implementation and monitoring; early childhood research and research methods; and, effective professional development and technical assistance practices that result in high quality opportunities to improve early learning for young children.
- Commitment to a comprehensive systems approach and organizational planning that focus on clear priorities, realistic expectations and vigorous assessment.

- Knowledge and prior experience in financial and budgeting principles, contract management, and grant writing and administration.
- Strong team leadership, organizational, management and supervisory skills.
- Experienced facilitation and group leadership skills that result in collaborative success and desired outcomes while working with staff, volunteers, parents, early learning professionals and providers, community leaders, governmental officials, tribal partners, public and private entities and faith based groups in communities throughout the state.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Strong interpersonal relations and oral communication skills necessary to effectively articulate program goals with sensitivity to ethnic, cultural and local community differences.
- Entrepreneurial style and innovative ability to think critically and address problems resourcefully.
- Ability to promote and achieve a broad diversity of thought, background, ethnicity and perspective in providing assistance and resources.
- Commitment to uphold high ethical standards and promote sound business practices.
- History of creating and fostering a mutually respectful work place environment where diverse contributions and perspectives are valued.
- Ability to ensure public transparency and accountability, as well as measure and improve outcomes appropriate for organizational goals.
- Agility and capability to work within a fast-moving environment, while also driving toward clarity and solutions; demonstrated resourcefulness in setting priorities.
- Technical skills that ensure effective use of computer hardware and software and other communication devices.
- Masters or doctorate degree preferred from an accredited college or university in early childhood education or special education, early childhood development, public policy or related field.
- Background of progressively responsible leadership positions in public, private or non-profit organizations, with experience in public policy and program development in early learning for young children.

Review of resumes will begin on Monday, September 24, 2012 and continue until the position is filled. For consideration, please submit a cover letter, comprehensive resume, and three professional references to:

www.azstatejobs.gov

This position is not covered by the State Personnel Merit System, but the State of Arizona provides a comprehensive benefits package, including a top-rank retirement plan and low cost health and dental coverage, and generous leave programs. Salary range for this position is \$80,000 to \$90,000.